

# John Pierpont

1785 - 1866

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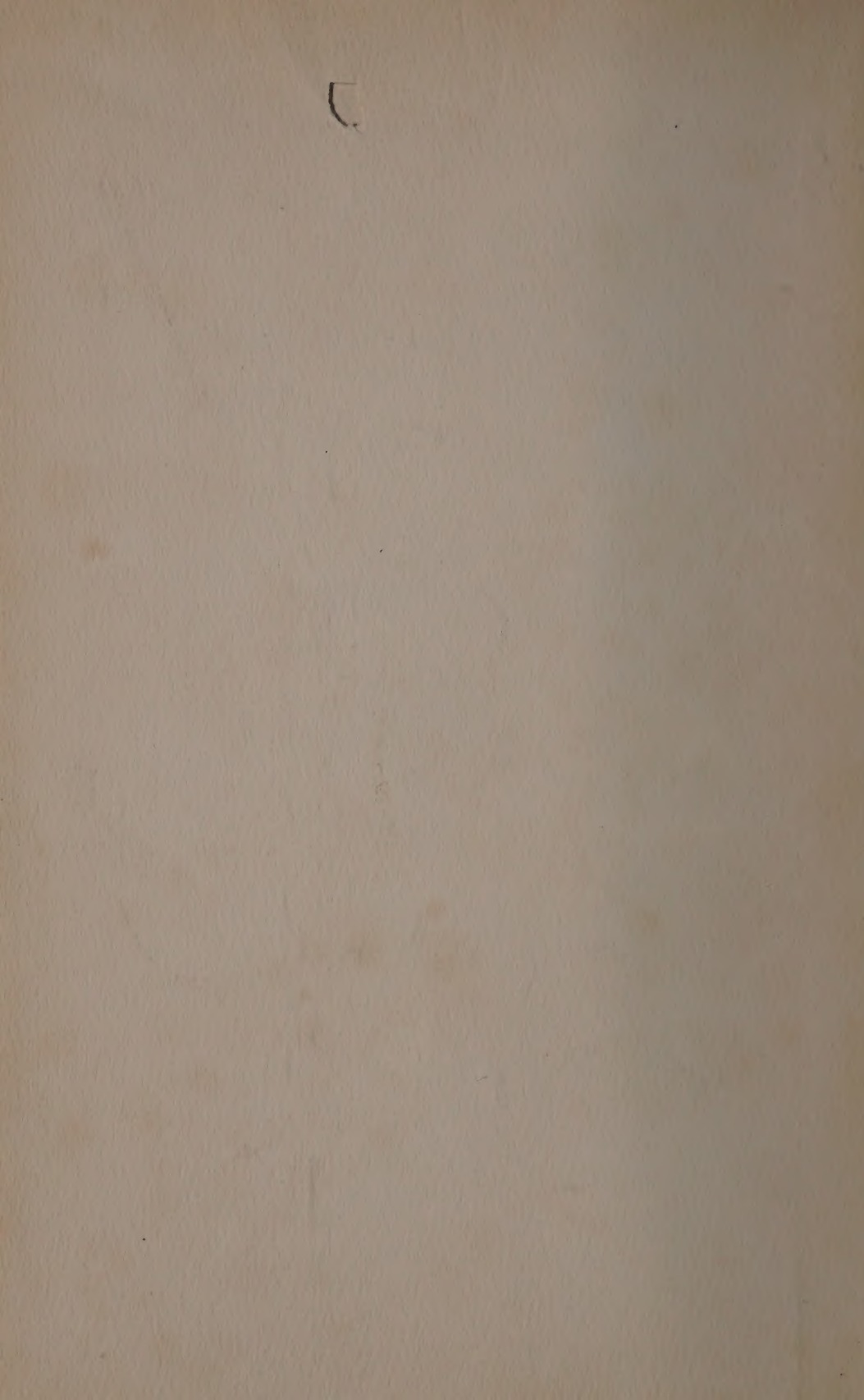
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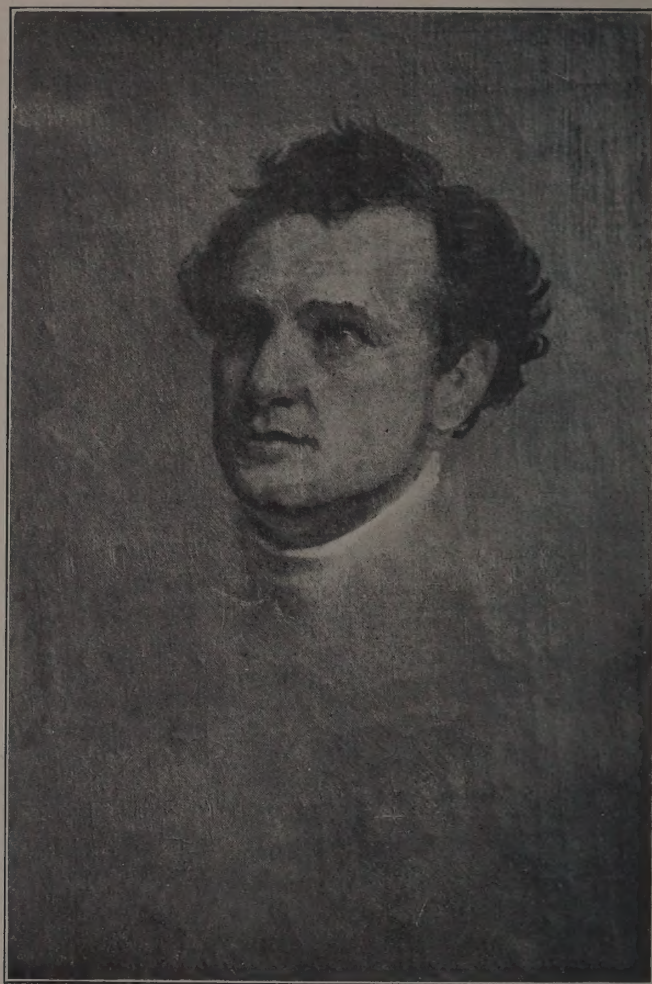
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JOHN PIERPONT.

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# JOHN PIERPONT

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## A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BY

ABBIE A. FORD

BOSTON

1909

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## JOHN PIERPONT



THOUGH the old legend tells us that Minerva sprang full-fashioned from the head of Jove, we of today, believers in evolution, look for a more gradual development of our heroes and heroines, and we enjoy seeking the factors that have produced interesting results in the way of character; the bit of heredity here, the touch of environment there, the failure of effort in one direction, and the unsought opportunity in another, which blended together have formed a human life.

Lives having decided traits like that of Rev. John Pierpont, the preacher, poet, and reformer, impress us as being more than commonly influenced by heredity, and we are not surprised to find that his progenitors were men and women of prominence in the early history of both France and England.

It goes without saying that the name of Pierpont is of French origin. One Sir Hugh of the name was, in 980, Lord of Castle Pierrepont, in the southern confines of Picardy, branching from the lords of Castle Pierrepont, six miles from St. Sauveur, Normandy, whence the chronicler tells us the family received its name. Not finding a ferry there, Charlemagne caused a *stone bridge* to be built, giving the name Pierre-pont to the place, and I cannot help thinking no more fitting name could have been handed down to one who was to become a leading reformer and philanthropist of his time, a stone bridge standing strong and firm above the surging waters of life to make a safe pathway for his fellowmen who might have sunk otherwise in the gulf of slavery, intemperance, or unbelief; a stone bridge, helping them to gain the shore of a future life in comfort and in peace.

A younger son of the family, one Sir Robert de Pierrepont, knt., went over from France to England in 1066 as a commander under William the Conqueror, and was given large estates in Suffolk and Sussex becoming ancestor to Sir Henry Pierpont, born 1545, who married Frances Cavendish, a direct descendant of William the Conqueror's daughter and the Earls of Surrey, Warwick, and Albemarle. Their son, made Earl of Kingston in 1628, had a cousin, James Pierpont, who lived in Derbyshire and carried on a trade between England and Ireland. In time the business extended to the colonies across the Atlantic, and two of James' sons came to America where one, the Hon. James Pierpont, settled for life in 1640, buying three hundred acres of land in Roxbury, Massachusetts.

In this way the Pierpont family journeyed from France through England to America, and although the Rev. John Pierpont numbered among his progenitors dukes, earls, and the Royal William, and married his fourth cousin, who traced her ancestry back to King Alfred, along a path thickly strewn with strawberry leaves, I am sure, in his honest democratic heart he would have said with Tennyson:

"'Tis only noble to be good,  
Kind hearts are more than coronets,  
And simple faith than Norman blood."

In fact, a verse of one of Pierpont's own poems runs thus:

"Not victory on the battlefield,  
Nor breast bestarred, nor gartered knee,  
Nor quarterings of a blazoned shield,  
But patient, useful industry,  
In farmer, scholar, artisan,  
Or merchant, makes the nobleman."

As we have seen, the Pierpont family became Americanized in 1640. The London born Hon. James Pierpont who settled in Roxbury was a man of substance and sent his son, James, to Harvard College. James studied for the ministry and is worthy of our special attention for several reasons.



He was the great-grandfather of Rev. John Pierpont, of Hollis Street Church, who seems to have inherited many of his traits. He was one of the founders of Yale College, the father-in-law of Jonathan Edwards, and had for his particular friend Cotton Mather, the noted Boston divine. We are indebted to Leonard Bacon for much interesting information as to Rev. James Pierpont.

He tells us that "when Mr. Pierpont was called to the parish of the First Church of New Haven, in 1685, at the age of twenty-five years, a houselot and house were provided for him by voluntary subscription, one of the most stately and commodious dwellings in the town. For more than a century it stood a monument of the public spirit of the generation by whose voluntary contributions it was erected. One man having nothing else to offer brought two little elm saplings and planted them before the door of the minister's house. Under their shade more than forty years after Jonathan Edwards spoke words of mingled love and piety into the ears of Sarah Pierpont."

After Mr. Pierpont had preached some years it was voted by the town to pay him "£120 annually in grain and flesh, also to supply him with firewood."

He accepted it until (as he said) the providence of God should bring his family into such circumstances as that the salary would not support him in laboring at the altar.

In 1698 he with two other ministers concerted the plan of founding a college, and the ensuing year ten of the principal ministers of the colony were chosen as trustees of the institution. It was temporarily placed at Saybrooke, but was removed to New Haven in 1716, two years after Mr. Pierpont's death. Besides drawing up certain articles for the College Pierpont is said to have lectured to the Yale students as Professor of Moral Philosophy.

Bacon says his pulpit style was clear, lively, impressive, without the affected quaintness that characterized some of



the most eminent men of that day, and at his death Cotton Mather said of him, "He has been a rich blessing to the church of God."

Though Pierpont died at the age of 55 he had married three times, Sarah, the wife of Jonathan Edwards, being a daughter by his latest marriage.

One son was tutor at Yale, and a grandson, James, who married Elizabeth Collins of South Farms, Litchfield, was the father of Rev. John Pierpont, of Hollis Street.

We have seen what hereditary influences may have helped to form the character of John Pierpont, and now let us look at some of the environments that were scarcely less potent in making him a patriot of the highest ideals, and a poet imbued with the deepest religious sentiment. Pierpont was born at Litchfield, South Farms, on the 6th of April, 1785.

At the time of his birth Litchfield was one of the leading towns of the young republic, the home of farmers of the strictest integrity and patriotism, and of some of the most learned men and women of the country. It was there that the first Law School of the land was founded in 1784, a school which attracted many of the Yale graduates, and stimulated the mental activities of all the inhabitants of the beautiful village.

No child born in such a place at such a time could fail to catch something of the spirit that animated Washington and the other founders of our republic; surrounded by thinking men and women, breathing in a very atmosphere of patriotism, it is not strange that Pierpont from his earliest days was thrilled through and through with the deepest love for his native land, a love that made him sing in his maturer years,

"Land of my birth thou art a holy land  
Strong in thy virtues mayst thou ever stand,  
As in thy rocks and mountains thou art strong!  
And as thy mountain echoes now prolong

The cadence of thy waterfalls—forever  
Be the voice lifted up of Time's broad river,  
As on it rushes to the eternal sea,  
Sounding the praises of thy sons and thee."

Yes, fortunate indeed was Pierpont in the time of his birth and no less so in the place of it since the natural beauties of Litchfield could not fail to make a poet of one who noted its many charms.

Harriet Beecher Stowe, herself a native of the place, spoke of it as "a delightful village on a fruitful hill," and other writers have done justice to its scenery.

Pierpont's early education was obtained in the schools of his native village, after which he was sent to Yale College (where his father and grandfather had studied) graduating in 1804 in the class with John C. Calhoun.

The following year he went to Charleston, S. C., as tutor in the family of Col. Allston, and later, having studied at the Litchfield Law School, was admitted to the bar in 1811. The year previous he had married his fourth cousin, Mary Sheldon Lord. The young couple made their home in Litchfield for a few years and while there were parishoners of the Rev. Lyman Beecher, who had married them, Mr. Pierpont being at one time precentor of Beecher's church.

We next find Pierpont living at Newburyport, Mass., where he is practising law and writing political poems, one of which, called "The Portrait," written in 1812, attracted much attention. It was written in a style of epic stateliness and in a pessimistic vein. The poet imagines Washington in heaven beholding the growth and then the decadence of Columbia, "his child," and after eulogizing various dead heroes the writer mourns the present state of public affairs. The poem was written just after the Baltimore mob of 1812 had destroyed the office of the Federal Republican and murdered General Lingán, one of the defenders of the press. The lines were most fearless and denunciatory, and when reprinted many years later Pierpont admits

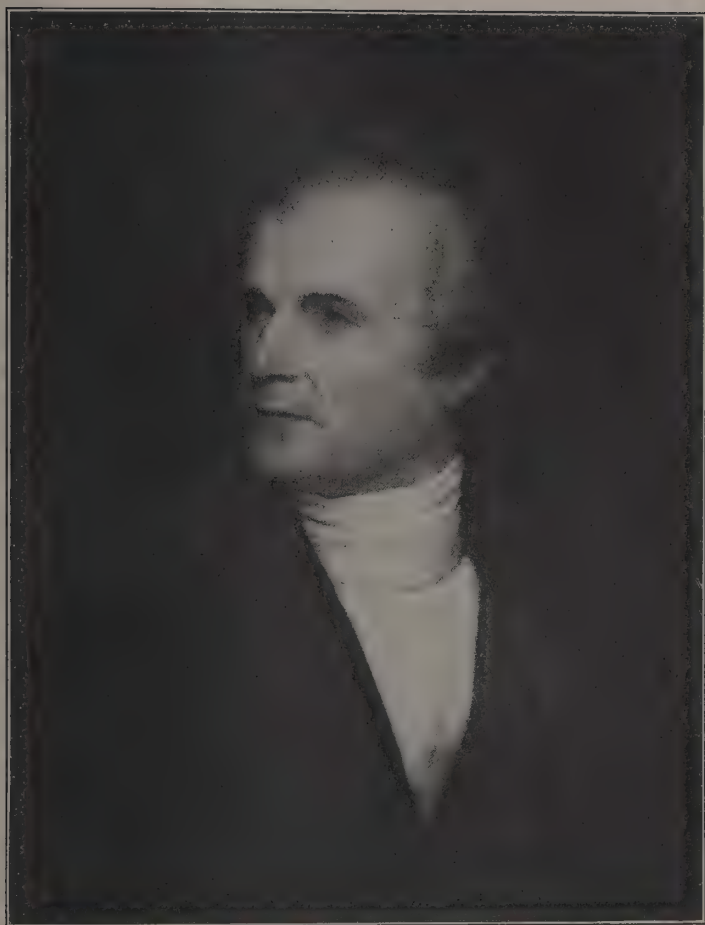
their "warmth of political feeling and party prejudice" but lets them "remain as memorials of fires that raged once but have long since gone out."

"The Portrait" made Pierpont's name known all over the country and not long after it appeared he came to Boston with his little family and opened a law office on Court Street. Here he was found by John Neal, who became his lifelong friend and who thus describes him while he was waiting for clients:

"Having nothing to do he spent much of his time in cutting his name on little ivory seals and engraving ciphers, J. P., so beautiful in their character and so graceful that one I have now before me, an impression taken by him in wax, with a vermilion bed, were enough to establish any man's reputation as a seal engraver. It bears about the same relation to what are *called* ciphers that Benevenuto Cellini's flower cups bore to the clumsy goblets of his day."

Pierpont was now thirty years of age with a young family and with rather delicate health, and despite his ability as a lawyer and the fact that his friends expected great things from him, his clients did not increase fast enough to meet his wants. Justice Story could not bear to think of his abandoning his profession while there was a chance of ultimate success, Mr. Neal tells us, but stern necessity drove the young advocate from the bar and into commercial life for which he was wholly unfitted. With his brother-in-law, Joseph Lord, he opened a retail jobbing and dry goods store on the corner of Court and Marlboro (now Washington) Streets, and in 1815 went into the wholesale business in Baltimore with John Neal as an added partner. The firm succeeded for a few months, but on opening a retail branch shop in Charleston, which they put in charge of an Englishman, they were defrauded by their clerk and failed in a little more than a year after leaving Boston. The young merchants were well-nigh discouraged and des-





JOHN PIERPONT.



perate at this sudden disaster, yet an incident told by Neal of this period of their lives has an amusing as well as a pathetic side.

To economize the families were living together in rooms over their shop. Going into the breakfast room rather late one morning, Mr. Neal said to Mrs. Pierpont:

"Where on earth is your good husband?"

"In bed making poetry," said she.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, flat on his back with his eyes rolled up in his head."

Soon after the gentleman himself appeared looking somewhat the worse for the labor he had gone through with. Handing me the paper written with the clearness and beauty of copperplate,

"Here, tell me what you think of these lines," he said.

Without dwelling longer on this trying time in Pierpont's life it is enough to say that in his retirement he wrote "The Airs of Palestine," of which I shall speak later, and that though his creditors compromised with him he gave himself no rest till he had after years of labor and family economy paid back the last dollar he owed.

When first going to Baltimore Pierpont had attended the Orthodox Church, but afterward became interested in the new Unitarian Church, for which he wrote a hymn in the cause of Liberal Christianity. He became an active worker in the little society that in time called Jared Sparks to its pulpit, not realizing what a change this work was to bring about in his own life.

And now in order to make this change understood I must speak, as briefly as possible, of the advent of liberal thought and Unitarianism in America.

Mr. Cooke, in his interesting volume on the subject, tells us of the great influence of Harvard College in liberalizing American religious ideas. As early as 1737 candidates for



degrees proposed to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity was not in the old Testament, and to advance other broad ideas, but the first Boston minister to preach openly against the Trinity, against Calvinism, and in favor of free inquiry in religion and politics was Jonathan Mayhew of the West Church. Though shunned by most of his brother ministers his courage soon led others to assert similar views so that by 1750 or '55 there were several preachers of the liberal faith around Boston, and Mayhew's ideas spread rapidly after his death in 1766. The great controversy in the Congregational Church began in 1805, when Henry Ware was nominated Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard two years after Channing was settled over the Federal Street Church, and the controversy was kept up even after the formation of the American Unitarian Association in 1825. When the division in the churches came about, one hundred and twenty-five allied themselves with the Unitarians, one hundred being in Massachusetts, and the Old South was the only Congregational Church in Boston that adhered to Calvinism. From 1816 to 1825 Unitarian Churches sprang up in New York state, in Virginia, North and South Carolina, and Washington.

John Pierpont, while practising law in Boston, had attended the Brattle Street Church where Edward Everett had been settled in 1814 at the age of 20. In Baltimore he heard Dr. Freeman preach in 1816, a year before the church was organized there, and quickly imbibing the broad views of the hour he decided to give up mercantile life, of which he had made a failure, and to study for the ministry.

Through Henry Ware's influence the Divinity School at Harvard College had been started on non-sectarian principles in 1816 and to Cambridge went John Pierpont to join the students who had caught the enthusiasm of the liberal religious movement of the times. So eager were these

young men that they insisted on church organization though Channing and others of the older ministers hesitated to take a step that might eventually bind them to a creed.

In January, 1819, Pierpont, then thirty-four years of age, accepted a call to the Hollis Street Church, Boston, the same year that Channing preached his noted sermon at Jared Sparks' installation in Baltimore, the sermon that was the first noteworthy declaration of Unitarianism.

In 1820 and '21 a publishing fund was started to circulate works on religion and morality regardless of "isms," and soon after two Unitarian periodicals appeared, one, the *Christian Register*, issued in April, 1821.

In 1824 a club was also started in Boston by thirty or forty leading men who met at private houses to discuss politics, morals and religion, Pierpont being one of its members.

From the time of his settlement at Hollis Street he had urged church organization and at last in 1825 he and other young ministers carried the day and the American Unitarian Association was formed. There was much discussion as to a name and Pierpont had the honor of settling the question.

Mr. Cooke writes:—"The most incisive word spoken, however, came from John Pierpont, who was just coming into his fame as an orator and leader of reforms. 'We have,' he declared, 'and must have, the name Unitarian. It is not for us to shrink from it. Organization is necessary in order to maintain it and organization there must be. The general interests of Unitarians will be promoted by using the name and organizing in harmony with it.'"

The fact that Pierpont's suggestion was accepted shows his influence in the body of liberal Christians in 1825. He had been preaching in Boston six years and his sermons had attracted wide attention. His friend, John Neal, describes him as "six feet tall, spare and straight, with

heavy black eyebrows and clear blue eyes which passed for black, and with the stiff black hair of the Huguenot, Southern type." Neal calls him ungraceful, but says the women of Mr. Pierpont's parish called him not only the most graceful but the most finished of gentlemen. He had a silvery voice and was a beautiful reader and these personal qualities, together with his energetic and positive manner of delivering his sermons commanded attention to his words. From the first he declared his intention to speak what he deemed the *truth* regardless of tradition, and one has but to read his sermons today, nearly ninety years after they were written, to realize how far in advance of his own time was this logical and fearless thinker.

Let me give a few instances.

Scouting too easy credulity, and wishing for the investigation of all theological points he says:

"Merely to give a doctrine a good name does not give it a title to that name, to call a doctrine evangelical does not make it so."

Again, "Are we of a contrite spirit and do we tremble at his word when we suffer any dogma or any church to ride in triumph over conscience dethroned and reason prostrated and the word of God contemned and his justice immolated? Let us beware lest by too highly revering the doctrines of men and undervaluing the means of religious knowledge which have been given us from on high we be found guilty of profaning the light of heaven, of bowing at altars and images which the powers of earth have set up, and of grieving the holy spirit of truth."

In a sermon to little children he wished them to feel that there is nothing cold and gloomy and repulsive about religion but that the child who is most religious will always be the most cheerful and happy. He recognized the poetry of the Bible, as the book of Job, and, an ardent lover of nature, he filled his sermon with homely illustrations of



natural scenes, of the storm, the lake, the country, etc. Indeed he anticipated Emerson in pleading for a more natural religion than prevailed among his brother preachers, saying,

“Enough has not been said in pulpits of the works of God shown in nature; theologians are too devoted to moral studies, inquiries and speculations, while natural science, the knowledge of God’s works, is left to academy, lecture room, and halls of sciences. We must see God in his works to believe there is a God.”

In a note to one of his sermons on a Communion Sunday in 1820 are these characteristic words as to open communion, written after saying that all were invited to remain and that about half who stayed were not church members: “I make this memorandum at this time because the event may become a memorable one in our Congregational Churches, as this is *probably* the first instance of *entirely* free communion in any one of them within the last century. May the day be not only memorable but gratefully remembered by all friends of religious liberty as well as by all advocates for the restoration of the primitive constitution and discipline of the churches of Christ. If I shall herein have given sufficient cause of offense to my Christian brethren out of my own church, and that through ignorance and rashness, may God forgive me. If any are offended *without* cause, may he forgive them.”

While preaching these thought-stirring sermons at Hollis Street, Pierpont, like most Unitarians of the day, was interesting himself in public affairs and receiving honors outside his parish. Before 1825 he had been made Chaplain of the State Senate, a Trustee of the Boston Public Library, a member of the School Committee while Boston was yet a town. He had also had the degree of M.A. conferred on him by both Yale and Harvard Colleges. These interests kept him very busy but he was a man of marvellous in-

dustry and energy. He made a study of phrenology and spiritualism, lecturing on both subjects through New England. He believed phrenology would in time make a *science* of morals. As to spiritualism, he has been claimed as a firm believer in it, but his attitude was one of investigation, not conviction; he could not account for certain phenomena that came to his knowledge and felt there was some force or power not understood at the foundation of them, taking the very attitude of the most scientific men of to-day, ever seeking the exact truth.

He had also a taste for mechanics, inventing the Doric or Pierpont stove and other things, passing many hours at his work bench fashioning useful articles or dainty toys of ivory or wood. Like that of Leonardo da Vinci the man's genius blossomed in various directions.

Pierpont's gift of writing occasional poems was early recognized and in 1825, when General Lafayette visited this country to assist in laying the cornerstone of Bunker Hill Monument and Daniel Webster delivered the oration, John Pierpont was invited to write a poem and to furnish a song for the banquet table. The poem begins:

"O, is not this a holy spot!"

and the stirring song which the poet called "Warren's Address to the American Soldiers" has for its opening lines,

"Stand! the ground's your own, my braves!

Will ye give it up to slaves?"

This poem reminds some of us of our school days, and I may say here that Pierpont compiled several reading books filled with selections from the prose and verse of the best English and American writers; the National Reader, introduced into the Boston schools in 1829; the Young Reader and the American First Class Book, which held a place in the schools for many years.

In 1829, owing to impaired health, he spent three months in the West, preaching in all the large cities, and on his return resumed his church duties and the numerous tasks

he had outside his parish in the way of installation hymns, and dedicatory poems. Two subjects of vital importance were at this period agitating the minds of public-spirited men, temperance and slavery. As early as 1813 a society, promoted chiefly by Unitarians, had been organized at the State House, Boston, for the suppression of intemperance and the movement had rapidly gained ground. Pierpont became one of its warmest advocates, voicing his radical views in the most positive terms.

I have spoken of the fearless way in which he defended freedom of the press in his poem, "The Portrait," written in 1812, and he was now equally bold in calling for temperance reform.

In regard to slavery the Unitarian ministers were divided in opinion, differing as to methods, but Pierpont was an abolitionist from the start. When Garrison issued the first copy of "The Liberator" in 1831, Pierpont stood bravely by him, as did Samuel J. May and the Quaker poet, Whittier, then but little known, and I am told that not a number of "The Liberator" was printed that did not contain one or more articles from John Pierpont's pen. The Unitarian divine was by this time a full-fledged reformer, destined to reap his share of a reformer's reward in the way of enemies and of heartache.

In November, 1831, fifteen men met in the office of Samuel E. Sewall in State Street with the idea of forming a New England Anti-Slavery Society, and the result of this meeting is national history. Among the Unitarian clergymen neither Dr. Gannett nor Mr. Morrison advocated extreme abolition methods, and O. B. Frothingham called Unitarians lukewarm in the matter. Channing, though lending countenance to the movement, was condemned by both sides, but in 1836 he joined the abolition ranks.

In 1835 Theodore Parker entered on his ministry in Boston and the first clergyman to greet him heartily was

John Pierpont, who never waited to see how popular opinion was drifting. He recognized at once Parker's sincerity and broadness of mind, the two became friends, and stood shoulder to shoulder in the troubled times that followed.

In 1836 Pierpont spent some months travelling in Europe for his health and returning met a warm welcome from his parishoners though his pronounced views on temperance and abolition were paving the way for dissension in the society. The breach was widened by the publication of his poem, "The Tocsin," in 1838, which he prefaced with these words of Webster:—

"If the pulpit be silent, whenever or wherever there may be a sinner, bloody with this guilt within the hearing of its voice, *the pulpit is false to its trust.*"

The poem rings with denunciations of so-called "free" men who are slaves to the slaveholders, sounding the alarm in no uncertain tones.

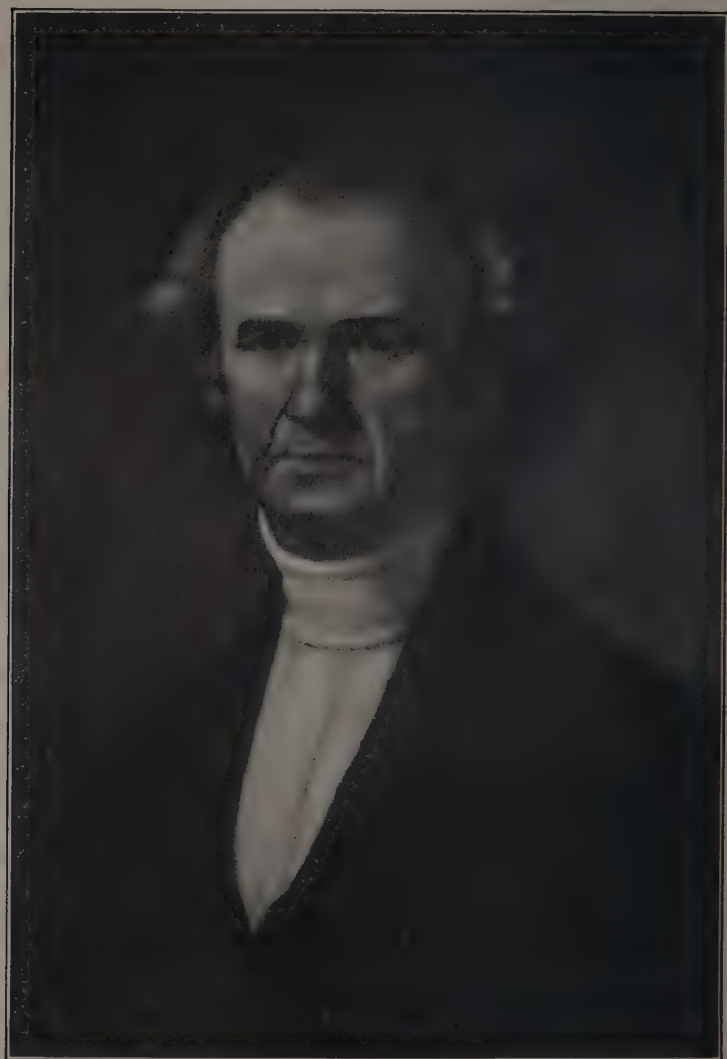
About this time, too, Pierpont went before the legislature to advocate a license law restricting the sale of liquor, and also helped to bring about the repeal of the law of imprisonment for debt. Though there were few direct allusions to these topics in his sermons his position in the community was well defined and influential.

In the church difficulty which followed we must bear in mind that on one side were church proprietors of varied financial and social interests, in which they were deeply concerned, and on the other a fearless man, strong in his convictions with the *extreme views* of all reformers and wholly deficient in the art of diplomacy, a "stone bridge" in very truth, standing firm and inflexible, ready to sacrifice all but his honor for the causes he upheld. This being the case a clash was inevitable over the exciting topics of that date.

In October, 1838, Pierpont wrote his resignation, but his friends withheld it, believing the voice of the majority of







JOHN PIERPONT.

FROM A PAINTING BY WALTER M. BRACKETT.

the congregation favorable to him. Later the proprietors voted to dismiss Mr. Pierpont, but he refused to leave till certain charges against him had been refuted or proved.

It has been said of Jared Sparks that he was "aggressive and by no means willing to keep to the quiet and reticent manner of the Unitarians of Boston. When he was attacked he replied with energy and skill, and carried the war into the enemies' camp," and the same might well be said of Pierpont.

Without going into details let me say that after much correspondence in which neither side spared the other, an Ecclesiastical Council met at Hollis Street Church in 1841, to try Mr. Pierpont after he had *demand*ed a full investigation. Each Unitarian society of the city was represented by its minister and one lay delegate except the West Church, under Dr. Bartol, which declined to take part.

The Council was simply to give its opinion on the advisability of dismissing the pastor, and each side had the right to appeal the case to the Supreme Court if dissatisfied with the decision. Having read the trial as recorded by Rev. Samuel K. Lothrop, I would advise all students of human nature to do the same; it lasted nearly six months and was a topic of public interest.

The minister was charged, among other things, with too great interference in legislative measures and with the public controversies of the day. He believed, on the other hand, that he was fighting for a free pulpit, and so skillfully did he contest every inch of ground that his opponents complimented him at the close of the trial on his legal ability, while his friends felt that the bar lost a brilliant advocate when he became a clergyman.

The trial resulted in Pierpont's favor, the Council saw no cause for his dismissal, but thought his communications, while not vindictive, might have been more conciliatory and dignified. They commended his closely scanned record

of more than twenty years at Hollis Street, and advised forbearance and reconciliation in the society.

The proprietors appealed, but a second trial, in the Supreme Court, confirmed the first decision, and the matter was settled by the payment of \$13,000 to Mr. Pierpont, the church being mortgaged for this purpose. His salary had been withheld for some time and he had been cared for by voluntary contributions in the parish, a loan which he repaid at the time of settlement. It is interesting to know that the Sunday School teachers and the women proprietors of Hollis Street were in Pierpont's favor throughout the controversy.

In spite of the seriousness of the contest one humorous incident occurred. Regardless of Pierpont's protests the proprietors leased the church cellar for the storage of liquors, and one Sunday as he was entering the house of worship he found a paper with this rhyme tacked to the door:—

“There's a spirit above and a spirit below,  
A spirit of love and a spirit of woe;  
The spirit above is the spirit divine,  
The spirit below is the spirit of wine.”

The writer of the lines was never discovered.

Pierpont's vindication settled for all time the right of the Boston pulpit to freedom of speech, but we can scarcely realize in these days the courage it took to assert such a right in the year 1840. Brave, indeed, would the ministers of today be who dared to *exclude* from their pulpits topics of public interest, and unworthy of their high office would they be deemed if they took no note of secular affairs.

Pierpont and Parker, who fought for the ethical importance and sacredness of so-called secular matters, were ahead of their times, lonely pioneers who met with but few hearty sympathizers among their brother clergymen.

When Pierpont took his farewell of the Boston ministers after his resignation he blamed those who stood aloof from him and helped to make his resignation a necessity to one



of his sensitive nature; he was grateful to those who had stood by him, and ready to forgive those who had not.

At the suggestion of Dr. Chandler Robbins, the Association of Ministers sent Pierpont a hearty letter of brotherly wishes and goodwill, drawn up by Drs. Robbins and Gannett, to which Pierpont replied:

"This is an unusual courtesy. The last words spoken to me by Channing, and the last note addressed to me by Henry Ware, were full of sympathy with me in my peculiar trials, and of encouragement to go on in the peculiar course that had brought me into them."

Dr. Robbins, we remember, was a successor of Ware, and Dr. Gannett the colleague and successor of Channing.

In closing this subject I wish to mention an incident that happened nearly a score of years later. Pierpont was then living in Washington, and paid annual visits to Boston. One day on State Street he encountered the man who had been his bitterest opponent at Hollis Street. The gentleman stepped up to him and extended his hand, saying, "Mr. Pierpont, I am glad to meet you. I have always respected you and for the last few years I have wanted to tell you that you fought a good fight at Hollis Street. I realize now that you were right and I was wrong." Let us look at that hand clasp given and received in the spirit of the Master as the genuine treaty of peace in what has been called the Seven Years' War in Hollis Street Church.

In 1840, five years before leaving Boston, Pierpont published his only volume of verse, a collection of odes, hymns and other occasional poems, about ninety in all, under the name of "Airs of Palestine and other Poems." In the preface he says, "Poetry is not my vocation," and goes on to call his collection "the wares of a verse-wright made to order." He says further, "If poetry is always fiction there is no poetry in this book. It gives a true expression of the author's feelings and faith, of his love of right, freedom

and man, and his most hearty hatred of everything that is at war with them, and of his faith in the providence and gracious promises of God."

We can only glance at the book in a general way. "The Airs of Palestine" was written at Baltimore in 1816 to be recited at a charity concert of sacred music. It is written in heroic style, is full of biblical and classical allusions, and extols music as the inspirer of religion.

The lines run smoothly, as do all of Pierpont's lines; they are learned, graceful and meditative, showing the writer to be at once a scholar and a thinker, a combination more rare than we are apt to imagine; as a whole the poem is an interesting one in spite of its discursiveness.

The poem "Moslem Worship" shows his liberality in religion, and "Passing Away," a Dream, which he put into verse, is full of imagination, in direct contrast to his scathing denunciation of wrong in the poems on slavery and intemperance.

The poems already referred to, "The Portrait" and "The Tocsin," are included in the collection. His hymns are comforting and uplifting, and his patriotic lyrics as musical and inspiring as Campbell's and Scott's, deserve a high place in American literature. Several are well known especially the one written for the Pilgrim Society at Plymouth in 1824, beginning,

"The Pilgrim Fathers, where are they?"

and the one written for the Bunker Hill celebration.

"The Exile at Rest," written in 1828, refers to Napoleon at St. Helena and this is the first verse of the stately poem:—

"Here sleeps he now alone; not one  
Of all the kings whose crowns he gave,  
Nor sire, nor brother, wife nor son,  
Hath ever seen or sought his grave."

We notice in all Pierpont's verse perfect rhythm and an adaptability of meter to the subject. His poems are not

mere musical words, however, but ideas, and, what is more, ideas of his own worked out through his individual heart and brain and soul so that they have an impressiveness and vitality wanting in what many might call a higher grade of verse.

The volume we have looked at represents but a small part of his work in poetry, for several of his lectures were in verse; a number of his poems have never been published and many of his sermons and scientific lectures abound in poetic feeling though not written in measured lines.

Of his poetical work someone has said,

"Had there been no slavery in the land, no drunkenness and no imprisonment for debt, it is hard to say what the poetic faculty of a mind at once so strong and so graceful might not have produced."

After resigning from Hollis Street Pierpont went to Troy, N. Y., where he preached four years, returning to New England in 1849 as pastor of the Unitarian Church at Medford, Mass. His life here was congenial and happy, varied with pastoral labors, scientific researches, and lecturing tours which took him as far west as Illinois.

While at Medford, he one day received a letter directed thus:

"To Medford go, in Massachusetts State,  
And seek a peaceful entrance at the gate  
Where Pierpont dwells, the poet and divine,  
Who stirred the gentle "Airs of Palestine."

Active as Pierpont had been in many walks of life he felt one more call to duty and at the age of seventy-six, he who had always preached patriotism put it into practice by enlisting in the Civil War as Chaplain of the 22d Mass. Infantry. As he marched through Boston to join the army his venerable form tall, erect and vigorous, he seemed imbued with the spirit of the Pilgrim Fathers and of Washington, whose praises he had so often sung. But though the spirit was willing the flesh was weak, and after



spending a short time in camp life near Washington his poor health compelled him to give up army life. His friends then obtained for him a clerical position at the Capitol where his legal knowledge came into use. He became intimately acquainted with Lincoln in this way and his friendship was a great comfort to the President when his young son died at the White House.

Pierpont's eightieth birthday was celebrated April 6, 1865, in Washington. A surprise party was given him and he received a letter signed by over two hundred of his former parishoners of Boston and Medford, also money and other gifts. Poetic greetings were sent him by Bryant, Whittier, and Holmes. Longfellow wrote sending "best wishes, words of affection, respect and honor to this true poet and prophet." Mrs. Sigourney addressed him as "Poet and Sage," and Charles T. Brooks called him "Priest of the Muses, Soldier of the Truth, Servant of Christ, and the long-tried friend of every manly cause." R. H. Dana, Jr., wrote, "I wish to offer you my thanks for one work in which you did great good to an entire generation. I mean your American First Class Book. I owe to that my first literary tastes and enjoyments and a few years ago I bought a copy for the purpose of renewing my acquaintance with it, It keeps its place in the judgment of critics as the best of American collections. We owe you much for being the first to place public school reading and speaking books on a high basis of tastes and morals." Charles Sumner wrote, "To you, a pioneer and poet, we are all debtors. I gladly seize this occasion to acknowledge the debt."

Mr. Pierpont had that morning written a poem in which he said his prayer of forty years had been answered, referring to the downfall of slavery.

Let me remind you that the date of this happy gathering, April 6, 1865, was just after the surrender of Lee's army, which was virtually the close of the Civil War. The North was rejoicing and no shadow of the impending trag-

edy ' at Washington (to be enacted within ten days) darkened the brightness of the occasion.

All unconscious of the shock to come, Garrison sent this greeting to Pierpont:—"Your career has been an eventful one, distinguished for independence of thought, boldness of speech, fearlessness of investigation and an untiring interest in the cause of progress and reform on the broadest scale. You have been the echo of no man, no sect, no party, but have ever diligently sought to know the truth and maintain the right, and for thus asserting your manhood and remembering your accountability you have been called to suffer reproach, persecution, ostracism in no small measure, after the manner of those of old 'of whom the world was not worthy.' This treatment you have met bravely, serenely, victoriously, till even your old enemies are at peace with you and public honor attends your steps. As I write bells are ringing and guns firing and jubilant shouts are everywhere heard in the streets, at the tidings of the capture of Petersburg and Richmond. Through fiery judgment what a salvation is to be wrought out for our nation!" A few days later the whole world was struck with horror by the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.

The summer of the following year found Pierpont again in Boston and one Sunday in August he attended services at the Medford Church where he had formerly preached. He seemed in the best of health despite his age and planned to visit a near relative the next day to talk over the subject of writing his reminiscences, but this work was never to be accomplished, for on that Monday morning he was found in his bedroom sleeping his last sleep, peacefully at rest, to wake, as we believe, to new activities in another life. I am told there was one clause in the church service that John Pierpont would never read; it was the petition to be delivered from sudden death. He could not voice such a petition, feeling that we should be always prepared.

We cannot but regret that Pierpont did not write out his recollections of men and events. A child of four years when Washington was first inaugurated, and a thoughtful youth of fourteen when the country was thrown into mourning by Washington's death; coming into contact, in his early manhood, with Lafayette, Webster, and the most noted men and women of the day, and in his last years the close friend of Lincoln, his reminiscences would have been of boundless interest and historic value.

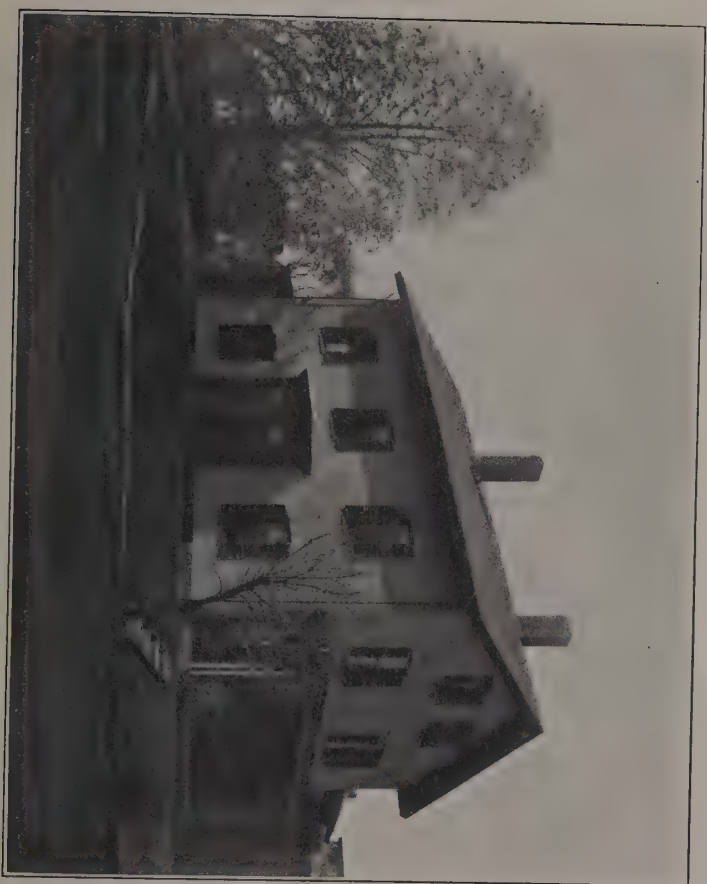
He had a large correspondence and carefully kept his letters and papers, arranging them methodically in barrels. At one time he wanted a paper he had put away five years before and wrote to his daughter that she would find it "in the fifth row from the top of the barrel, in the middle of the row, in the file of letters of such a date," and it was easily found.

Order, thoroughness and industry marked his whole life. While waiting for clients in Boston he copied the whole of Blackstone to make himself familiar with its contents, a copy I have seen in his small, even, distinct handwriting.

His home life was most beautiful; while unquestionably the head of the house, as men were expected to be in his time, he was even-tempered and affectionate, and his grandchildren remember to this day the merry romps they had with him when he chased them from one end of the house to the other. Though dignified and reserved with strangers his heart warmed for his friends and the unfortunate; he loved little children and knew every child in his Hollis Street parish by name as well as by sight.

With a great memory and keen sense of humor Pierpont had a fund of anecdote and often indulged in punning. A public instance of this has come to me. A Yale graduate, many years Pierpont's junior, writes me, "I never saw John Pierpont but once and that was in 1854 or '55 at a meeting of the Yale Alumni. President Woolsey was in





HOME OF JOHN PIERPONT,  
MEDFORD, MASS.



the chair and in his opening remarks said, 'I always have a crawling sensation when I speak of the finances of the college.' In an instant Pierpont was on his feet. The President lifted his hand deprecatingly, but the poet-preacher stood his ground and said, 'I only wished to ask, Mr. President, if you have been able to worm anything out.' My friend adds, I have somehow the impression, not from this incident alone, that Pierpont was something of a punster, but always a brave, strong man."

His personal likeness has been preserved in three oil paintings, one by Alexander when Pierpont was about thirty-five years old, now owned by his granddaughter, Mrs. Morgan, of Lenox; one by Brackett, owned by J. Pierpont Morgan, his grandson and namesake, and the most widely known of his descendants, and a third painted by his friend, Rembrandt Peale, owned by a Boston granddaughter of the clergyman. There is also in California a marble bust, by Carew, called the sculptor's best work, and plaster casts of the bust are to be seen in the Boston Public Library and the Girls' Normal School, and in the homes of several of his old parishoners.

The first wife of Pierpont, by whom he had six children, three sons and three daughters, died in 1855, and a few years later he married a widow, who survived him. He was buried at Medford, but his remains were afterwards removed to Mt. Auburn where his family erected a monument in sarcophagus form with this inscription by John J. May, one of his warmest friends:—

"Poet, Patriot, Preacher, Philosopher, Philanthropist, Pierpont."

In the church on Exeter Street, Boston (where the Hollis Street and South Congregational Churches now form one society), is a stained glass window, the gift of Pierpont's daughter, Juliet Pierpont Morgan, mother of J. Pierpont Morgan.

In 1885, the centennial of the poet's birth was celebrated at the church and one of his own hymns was sung, the one beginning—

"O Thou, to whom in ancient times,  
The lyre of Hebrew bards was strung."

Before writing the final words of this sketch of John Pierpont's life let me give you two estimates of his character by well known men, one his contemporary, Rev. Nathaniel Hall, of Dorchester, the other Rev. George L. Chaney, one of his successors at Hollis Street.

The Sunday following Pierpont's death Mr. Hall said of him, "He loved men. There was no hatred in his bosom, none towards them, but towards the sophistries that misled them and the evils that degraded and the selfishness that would take or keep from them God-given boons there was a hatred intense and inextinguishable. It was because he loved men that he hated whatever cursed and wronged them, rallied against it all the keenness of his logic, and all the sharpness of his satire, and all the pungency of his wit, and all the might of his invective, and all the wealth and glow of his imagination. That there may have been errors of judgment in pursuit of his ends, that he may have made exciting topics needlessly exciting and the tone and manner of his denunciations needlessly offensive, is not impossible. But it must be a narrow and ungenerous soul that is not willing to overlook whatever of these there may have been in the loftiness and pureness of his aims, in the entireness of his fidelity, in the grandeur of his self-regardless heroism."

And this is Mr. Chaney's tribute of more recent date:—"I know not by personal observation what faults this man may have had or what indiscretions he may have committed, but for one I honor him, yes, with all the passion and admiration of my heart, I love and honor the courage of the man and his uncompromising faithfulness to the



truths he believed. I pray to God that when I come to stand before that judgment seat which alone can exalt and cast down, I may be found to have been as true as he was to the absolute demands of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come. If I do not repeat his ways, it is not that I love his cause the less."

And now in closing I think I cannot do better than to repeat the words Pierpont always used in some part of his religious service, since they voice the lofty ideal he pursued through life and point to us our individual responsibility:—

"Grant, O Father, that we may so live that the world may be the wiser and the better for the part that we have had in it."











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